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THE FARM WORKING FORCE OF 1943

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About 14.5 million different persons worked on the Nation's farms in 1943. Some of these worked full-time, some for very short periods only, but altogether they worked about 20 to 25 billion hours to turn out last year's record production of food and fiber.

These figures are derived from a Nation-wide sample enumeration made early in 1944 to provide information on the full- and part-time farm workers in 1943, on the amount of time they put in farm work, and on the season of the year when they worked. 1/ Because of the seasonal nature of farm work and the large turnover of persons who do small amounts of farm work during the year, the total number of different workers in a year is naturally greater than the number at work at any given time--even at the peak month. 2/

The survey showed that a total of 12.4 million of the civilian population 14 years of age and over who were living in private households in January 1944 worked on farms during all or part of 1943. An estimate of an additional 2.1 million persons not covered by the survey but who worked on farms for some period of the year--children from 10-14 years of age, persons who entered the armed forces from farms during 1943, imported workers who had left the United States by the time the survey was taken, persons in institutions, prisoners, soldiers, and others who were not living in private households in January 1944, and persons who died during 1943 3/--raises the total to 14.5 million persons.

Persons who were living on farms in January 1944--farmers, members of their families, and hired workers who live on farms--did the bulk of the farm work in 1943. Of the 12.4 million different workers for whom the survey yields information, 9.7 million or 78.5 percent were farm residents (tables 1 and 2). 4/ On

- 1/ The sample enumeration was made by the Special Surveys Division of the Bureau of the Census for the Bureau of Agricultural Economics. See pages 14-15 for information on the size of the sample and the reliability of the estimates.
- 2/ At the peak in 1943, in October, an estimated 11,938,000 persons were reported by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics to be working on farms.
- 3/ From a small fraction of the sample covered no report to the questions on farm work was obtained; this "not reporting" group may have represented as many as 300,000 persons who did some farm work during 1943. The total of 14.5 million includes an allowance for this group.
- 4/ All numbers and percentages relating to persons working on farms during 1943 presented subsequently in the report relate only to the 12.4 million workers for whom estimates were derived from the survey.

the average, they worked a greater number of weeks and more hours per week than did farm workers who came out from cities, towns, and villages, and contributed 88.4 percent of the total time put into agricultural work during the year. At one time or another during 1943, however, some 2.7 million persons not living on farms in January 1944--1.9 million males and .8 million females--worked on farms.

### Seasonal Changes in Farm Workers

Every year there is normally a marked seasonal rise in the number of persons who work on farms from the first 4 months of the year to the summer and fall harvest months when agricultural labor requirements are higher. As the fall harvests are completed, the farm working force normally declines.

In 1943 nearly 3.5 million more persons 14 years of age and over worked on farms at some time during the May-October period of 1943 than during the first 4 months of the year. 5/<sup>1</sup> Women contributed heavily to this increase in farm workers, with 2 million more working at some time during the second period than during the first. Farm-resident women working on farms doubled in numbers (from 1.3 million to 2.7 million) while female farm workers not living on farms more than trebled. During the last 2 months of 1943, the number of persons working on farms fell to about the same number who worked in the first 4 months of the year except for over 300,000 more farm-resident women working in the November-December period.

Last year special efforts were made in many parts of the country to organize high school age youth into Victory Farm Volunteers for work on farms. The recent survey indicates that 1.8 million different youths 14-17 years of age did some farm work during the year (table 3). About 900,000 of these were farm-resident boys (in January 1944) and 400,000 were farm girls. Most of these farm youth might have participated in farm work without any special program, but a substantial part of the 500,000 nonfarm youth in this age group who worked on farms in 1943 undoubtedly was recruited through the Victory Farm Volunteers program. The seasonal increase in the youth from cities, towns, and villages was most marked; their numbers increased more than 4-fold from the first 4 months of the year to the May-October period.

Of the different persons employed in agriculture during 1943, 29 percent were female and 71 percent male, with women and girls working 20 percent of the man-weeks reported for all persons during the year (table 2). Since women on farms work fewer weeks during the year on the average than do men, the 20 percent of total weeks worked by women involved 29 percent of the total number of workers, but--with fewer hours worked per week--only 15.7 percent of the total hours worked.

5/ The difference in farm employment between the low month and the high month has averaged in recent years approximately 3.5 million. This figure approximates closely the increase in the number of different persons who work in the active part of the season over the number working in the slack parts of the year. However, the difference between the number of persons working on farms at the lowest employment point of the year and the number of different persons who do any farm work at all in the course of a whole year is much greater than the net seasonal increase in employment from the low to the high point.

Men living on farms comprise the majority of persons working in agriculture in every period of the year, even though the composition of farm workers varies considerably with the season. This group accounted for almost three-fourths of the total hours worked during the entire year.

Women and nonfarm residents become particularly important in the farm working force in the busy months from May through October. More than 2.8 million women living on farms—mainly wives, daughters, and other relatives of farmers—made up 23.2 percent of the total number of persons who worked in agriculture all or part of the time from May through October 1943. These farm women put in about one-sixth (16.2 percent) of the total hours of agricultural work done during this period, ranking second only to farm men in their importance to agricultural production. Only in the period from January through April did farm women contribute less than 10 percent of the total time put into farm work.

Nonfarm residents—males and females together—nearly equaled farm women in number of farm workers during these 6 months last year. They made up 21.0 percent of the total number of persons working during this period and accounted for 12.3 percent of the total hours of farm work done, contributing less than 10 percent of the total time only in the last period shown, November and December.

#### Hours of Work Involved

This survey also provided information by sex and January 1944 residence of workers on the number of hours worked (converted to 10-hour days in the tables), number of weeks in which some work was done and the average length of week worked during the entire year 1943 and for 3 periods (table 4). As would be expected, farm men averaged highest of all groups, with an average of 262 ten-hour days of time worked in agriculture during the year, an average of 43 calendar weeks in which some agricultural work was done, and an average work-week of 60 hours. For the period May through October, farm men reported an average of 66 hours worked per week, although their average dropped to 54 hours for the other two periods. Men and boys not living on farms averaged only 24 weeks of farm work during the year, a little more than half the number worked by farm men. Their average length of work-week was 50 hours for the entire year, with the average rising only to 52 hours per week during the busy season.

Women and girls averaged work-weeks of 44 hours for the entire year of 1943, with the average dropping to 35 hours for the January-April period. As they worked fewer weeks than the male workers during the various periods, their average amount of time (in terms of 10-hours days) was less than half the average for males or 105 ten-hour days during the year as compared with 231 days. However, even the non-resident women farm workers, the group which had the lowest average input of time in farm work, averaged 67 ten-hour days of work during the year, spread over 16 different calendar weeks of work.

In the case both of farm women and of the workers who do not live on farms the contribution to the record agricultural production of 1943 is not wholly reflected by the proportion of the total hours worked, since much effort may be wasted if needed labor is not available at crucial periods. Of the hours worked

by farm women, 73.8 percent were during the May-October period as compared with only 58.9 percent of the hours of farm men. Similarly, in the case of nonfarm residents, 65.3 percent of their farm work was in this period, and 74.8 percent in the case of the nonfarm women and girls.

#### Variation in Use of Labor

These averages do not reveal the great variation in farm-labor utilization of different groups of workers. The agricultural labor needs of 1943 were met by long and steady hours of the majority of the regular farm working force supplemented with short periods by many persons who do not usually work on farms and who helped only during critical seasonal peak periods. About 900,000 persons, about half male and half female, who worked on farms in 1943 worked less than 125 hours, which is only slightly more than 2 work-weeks of average length during the May-October period (table 5). An additional half million worked more than 125 but less than 250 hours. This 1.4 million workers contributed less than 1 percent of the total time worked in agriculture during the year (table 3), but without them a much larger percentage of the crops might not have been harvested. More than 800,000 of the 1.4 million persons working less than 250 hours were people from cities, towns, and villages.

Besides those who worked not much over a month, another 1.7 million persons worked for more than 250 but less than 750 hours, roughly corresponding to more than 1 month but less than 4 months. Thus 3.1 million persons, almost equally divided as between males and females, who worked up to 750 hours and averaged only slightly more than 300 hours during the year, were used during 1943 to meet the harvest demands for labor over and above that of the more regular farm working force.

Of these 3.1 million short-time workers, 1.4 million were nonfarm residents—900,000 men and boys, 500,000 women and girls. The remainder were 1.1 million farm women and girls and 600,000 farm men and boys. It must be remembered that these short-time workers were greatly augmented by children under 14 years of age, and by other special groups.

The bulk of agricultural work is, of course, performed by farm operators and regular year-round hired workers, although the short-time seasonal workers supply the extra help needed to save the harvests. More than 65 percent of all the farm work in 1943 was done by persons who worked 2,500 hours or more at farm labor during the year, the amount often considered as a full year's work (table 6). About 4.2 million of them were men and boys and only 240,000 of them were women and girls. Not all farm operators were full employed throughout the year, however. Of the operators working on their own farms in January 1944, more than 1 million reported less than 2,500 hours of farm work during 1943, with 800,000 of these reporting between 1,500 and 2,500 hours.<sup>6/</sup> It is probable that many

<sup>6/</sup> The farm operators working off their own farms in January 1944 were not classified separately and hence similar information is not available for them as a group.

of those who worked less than 1,500 hours had some off-farm employment during the year, but many of the 800,000 who worked between 1,500 and 2,500 hours probably worked only on their own farms which did not provide them full employment throughout the year.

In between the completely full-time group of workers and the short-time group, there were in addition to operators, persons of both sexes working for intermediate periods (table 5). The greatest number of farm-resident women and girls were in the group that worked 1,500-1,999 hours, while the greatest number of men and women from cities, towns, and villages were in the group working less than 125 hours.

#### Farm Workers in the Off-Season

When the peak agricultural season is over, many of those who work during the harvest withdraw from the labor market; this is especially true of housewives and students. In January 1944, some 3.5 million persons over 14 who had worked in agriculture during 1943 were not working for pay or income and were not looking for work. About 2.1 million of these were housewives who were doing only their own housework during January 1944. Another 1.1 million were youths attending school--700,000 boys and 400,000 girls 14 years of age or older--who had done farm work for varying periods in the summer and early fall. The remaining 300,000 were classified as too old or unable to work or they were nonworkers for some other reasons.

In addition to those who were not in the labor force, there were a great many persons who had worked on farms during 1943 who were not engaged in farm work in January 1944 but who were still in the labor market—at work or seeking work. Only about 7 percent of these were unemployed; the remainder were engaged in some type of other work. Workers employed in nonagricultural occupations in January 1944 who had done some farm work during 1943 include largely four types: (1) those who have permanently shifted from farm work to nonfarm work, whether by migrating or not; (2) those who live on farms and hold full-time nonagricultural jobs but who continue to do some farm work after working hours or on week-ends, especially in peak seasons; (3) those who regularly work on farms in the summer but shift to some other kind of work in the winter; and (4) townspeople who do not usually work on farms at all, but who responded to the war needs last year and helped harvest the crops in "twilight armies" and other special groups and as individuals working on farms during vacations or week-ends or during a few days taken off from nonfarm work.

#### Off-Season Occupations of Temporary Workers

More than a third of all these persons were employed in manufacturing industries (including the food industries) in January 1944, 17.1 percent in wholesale and retail trade, and 11.1 percent in professional and governmental service (table 7). No other major industry grouping has as many as 10 percent. These differences suggest sources of supply of workers in the agricultural season. Incidentally they suggest the relative importance of the several industries in providing off-season work for farm laborers. The differences in the average number of days worked in agriculture during 1943 by those who were in different industries at the time of the survey afford some clue as to which industries have relatively larger shares of the persons who did farm work for very short

periods last year. Persons who are now employed in professional or government work averaged the fewest days of farm work in 1943, suggesting that this group was made up to a considerable degree of "vacation" farm workers. On the other hand, the greatest average number of days of farm work was done by persons employed in construction work in January 1944. This group probably contains a considerable proportion of persons who regularly do hired farm work in the season but who shift to construction work in the winter.

#### Prospects for 1944

More vigorous special efforts will evidently be required this year than last to supplement the year-round farm working force with the numbers required for the summer and fall farming operations. Last year's experience can provide some basis for estimating the size of the task we face this year and most likely sources for obtaining the needed farm workers.

The largest group of intermediate and short-time farm workers during the season may be expected to come from persons not now in the labor force—housewives, students, and older men. Workers from these groups will need to equal or exceed the numbers which entered farm work last year to bring about a seasonal increase in total number of different persons working on farms equal to that which took place during 1943 from the January-April to the summer and fall period. Since we may expect some decrease from last year in the number of young men who would ordinarily shift from school to work on farms during the summer, recruiting programs may be necessary to increase the number of women now engaged only in their own housework and the number of girls over 14 now attending school who will do some farm work during the peak seasons in 1944. These two groups, probably offer the greatest available source of labor for fairly short periods. Extension of the Victory Farm Volunteers may be needed to bring more of the nonfarm youth into the farm working force than the half million who worked during 1943.

The other source of the supplementary farm labor consists of persons who were engaged in nonagricultural work in January 1944, many of whom are customarily so employed in winter but shift into agriculture with the advance of the season. These seasonal experienced farm workers are a very important group and make a substantial contribution of labor time input to agricultural production. In order that as many as possible of these farm laborers, who regularly work elsewhere in the winter, be available for farm work in this crucial war year of agricultural production for the war effort, agricultural wage conditions will need to provide an incentive for returning to farm work.

Mobilization of local townspeople for short but critical periods of the crop harvest will have to be accelerated in certain areas this year. By contributing their vacation and other short periods, persons employed in nonagricultural work may help out greatly particularly in localities where highly perishable crops are being harvested.

Table 1. Number of different persons who worked on farms at some time during 1943, by residence and sex, for 1943 and for 3 periods of the year 1/

Residence 2/ and sex of worker	1943 3/ (000)	Persons working on farms any time during:			
		January - April (000)	May - October (000)	November - December (000)	
Total	12,360	8,366	11,818		8,583
Farm residents	9,704	7,207	9,332		7,517
Males	6,880	5,950	6,595		5,935
Females	2,824	1,257	2,737		1,582
Nonfarm residents	2,656	1,159	2,486		1,066
Males	1,894	944	1,769		838
Females	762	215	717		228
Total males	8,774	6,894	8,364		6,773
Total females	3,586	1,472	3,454		1,810

1/ Data relate to persons 14 years of age and over in the civilian population and living in private households in January 1944.

2/ Residence of worker as of January 1944.

3/ The number of persons working on farms during 1943 is not equal to the sum of the figures shown for the separate periods of the year, since many individuals worked in more than one period.

Table 2. Percentage distribution of different persons who worked on farms at some time during 1943, of hours worked, and of weeks in which some work was done, by residence and sex of workers, for 1943 and 3 periods of the year 1/

	Entire year, 1943			January-April			May-October			November-December		
	: Weeks	::	:	: Weeks	::	:	: Weeks	::	:	: Weeks	::	:
Residence 2/ and sex of worker	: Per-sons	: in which	: sons	: Per-sons	: in which	: sons	: Per-sons	: in which	: sons	: Per-sons	: in which	: sons
	: work-ing	: Hours	: some work	: work-ing	: Hours	: some work	: Hours	: same work	: work-ing	: Hours	: same work	: work-ing
	(Pct.)	(Pct.)	(Pct.)	(Pct.)	(Pct.)	(Pct.)	(Pct.)	(Pct.)	(Pct.)	(Pct.)	(Pct.)	(Pct.)
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Farm residents	78.5	88.4	86.4	86.1	89.1	87.9	79.0	87.7	85.0	87.5	90.2	89.1
Males	55.7	74.8	69.3	71.1	81.2	76.3	55.8	71.5	64.6	69.1	78.5	74.4
Females	22.8	13.6	17.1	15.0	7.9	11.6	23.2	16.2	20.4	18.4	11.7	14.7
Nonfarm residents	21.5	11.6	13.6	13.9	10.9	12.1	21.0	12.3	15.0	12.5	9.8	10.9
Males	15.3	9.5	10.7	11.3	9.5	10.3	15.0	9.7	11.3	9.8	8.3	9.0
Females	6.2	2.1	2.9	2.6	1.4	1.8	6.0	2.6	3.7	2.7	1.5	1.9
Total males	71.0	84.3	80.0	82.4	90.7	86.6	70.8	81.2	75.9	78.9	86.8	83.4
Total females	29.0	15.7	20.0	17.6	9.3	13.4	29.2	18.8	24.1	21.1	13.2	16.6

1/ Data relate to persons 14 years of age and over in the civilian population and living in private households in January 1944.

2/ Residence of worker as of January 1944.

Table 3. Number of different persons 14-17 years of age who worked on farms at some time during 1943, by residence and sex for 1943 and for 3 periods of the year 1/

Residence 2/ and sex of worker	1943 3/	Persons working on farms any time during:			
		January - April		May - October	November - December
		(000)	(000)	(000)	(000)
Total	1,830	800	1,776	864	
Farm residents	1,299	684	1,273	746	
Males	895	556	875	583	
Females	404	128	398	163	
Nonfarm residents	531	116	563	118	
Males	368	81	344	84	
Females	163	35	159	34	
Total males	1,263	637	1,219	667	
Total females	567	163	557	197	

1/ Data relate only to persons in the civilian population and living in private households in January 1944.

2/ Residence of worker as of January 1944.

3/ The number of persons working on farms during 1943 is not equal to the sum of the figures shown for the separate periods of the year, since many individuals worked in more than one period.

Table 4. Average number of 10-hour days worked on farms, average number of weeks in which some work was done, and average length of week worked, by residence and sex of workers, for 1943 and 3 periods of the year 1/

	Entire year, 1943 (52 weeks)	January - April 1 (17 weeks)	May - October (26 weeks)	November - December (9 weeks)
Residence 2/	Average : no. of weeks			
and sex of worker	:no. in which hours 10-hour: some days worked :done	:no. in which hours 10-hour: some days worked :done	:no. in which hours 10-hour: some days worked :done	:no. in which hours 10-hour: some days worked :done
	:per hour	:per week	:per week	:per week
Total	194	35	56	72
Farm residents	219	38	57	74
Males	262	43	60	82
Females	116	26	44	38
Nonfarm residents	105	22	48	56
Males	120	24	50	60
Females	67	16	40	38
Total males	231	39	59	79
Total females	105	24	44	38

1/ Data relate to persons 14 years of age and over in the civilian population and living in private households in January 1944.

2/ Residence of worker as of January 1944.

Table 5. Number of different persons who worked on farms at some time during 1943, by residence, sex, and total number of hours worked <sup>1/</sup>

Total hours worked on farms during 1943	Total			Farm residents <sup>2/</sup>			Nonfarm residents <sup>2/</sup>		
	Both		Both	Both		Both	Both		Both
	Male (000)	Female (000)	Male (000)	Female (000)	Male (000)	Female (000)	Male (000)	Female (000)	Male (000)
Total	12,360	8,774	3,586	9,704	6,880	2,824	2,656	1,894	762
Under 125	907	451	456	339	81	258	568	370	198
125 - 249	538	250	288	267	78	189	271	172	99
250 - 499	872	389	483	555	187	368	317	202	115
500 - 749	824	433	391	540	241	299	284	192	92
750 - 999	596	304	292	419	186	233	177	118	59
1,000 - 1,499	1,256	659	597	995	495	500	261	164	97
1,500 - 1,999	1,307	723	584	1,118	582	536	189	141	48
2,000 - 2,499	1,343	1,142	201	1,133	957	176	210	185	25
2,500 and over	4,393	4,153	240	4,078	3,858	220	315	295	20
Hours not reported	324	270	54	260	215	45	64	55	9

<sup>1/</sup> Data relate to persons 14 years of age and over in the civilian population and living in private households in January 1944.

<sup>2/</sup> Residence of worker as of January 1944.

Table 6. Percentage distribution of persons who worked on farms at some time during 1943 and of hours worked, by total number of hours worked, by sex 1/

Total hours worked on farms during 1943	Persons			Hours worked		
	Total (Pct.)	Male (Pct.)	Female (Pct.)	Total (Pct.)	Male (Pct.)	Female (Pct.)
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Under 125	7.5	5.3	12.9	.2	.1	.8
125 - 249	4.5	2.9	8.1	.4	.2	1.4
250 - 499	7.2	4.6	13.7	1.4	.7	4.7
500 - 749	6.8	5.1	11.1	2.1	1.3	6.4
750 - 999	5.0	3.6	8.3	2.2	1.3	6.7
1,000 - 1,499	10.4	7.7	16.9	6.5	4.0	20.0
1,500 - 1,999	10.9	8.5	16.5	9.4	6.3	26.4
2,000 - 2,499	11.2	13.4	5.7	12.7	12.9	11.8
2,500 and over	36.5	48.9	6.8	65.1	73.2	21.8

1/ Data relate only to persons in the civilian population and living in private households in January 1944.

Table 7. Percentage distribution of different persons who worked on farms at some time during 1943 who were employed at nonagricultural jobs in January 1944, by sex and major industry 1/

Work status in January 1944	Persons		
	: Total (Pct.)	: Male (Pct.)	: Female (Pct.)
Employed in nonagriculture	100.0	100.0	100.0
Construction	7.8	9.5	-
Manufacturing	37.2	41.6	17.4
Transportation, communication, and utilities	7.3	8.6	1.7
Retail and wholesale trade	17.1	17.7	13.8
Domestic service	8.5	1.3	40.9
Professional service and government	11.1	9.5	17.7
All other	11.0	11.8	8.5

1/ Data relate to persons 14 years of age and over in the civilian population and living in private households in January 1944.

Note on the Special Survey in January 1944 of  
Farm-Labor Utilization during 1943

The national sample of more than 30,000 households enumerated were the same as those for which information was obtained for the regular Monthly Report on the Labor Force in January 1944. The estimates presented are subject to sampling error, especially in classifications where relatively few individuals are involved. The information on time spent in farm work during 1943 is, of course, subject to additional errors in memory, although the supervisors of the enumeration reported unusually good cooperation on the part of the respondents in attempting to make careful estimates of time worked.

In addition to the regular questions asked by the Census on personal characteristics, employment status, etc., the following questions were asked for each person 14 years of age and over in the households covered in urban and rural areas:

Did : If "Yes" in (16) enter number of weeks and average  
 this : weekly hours worked in farm work:  
 per- : Total : January - April : May - October : November - December  
 son : number : (17 calendar wks.) (26 calendar wks.) : (9 calendar wks.)  
 do farm : of weeks: : : : : :  
 work dur-:in farm : Number : Average: Number : Average : Number : Average  
 ing 1943?:work : of : hours : of : hours : of : hours  
 (Yes or :in 1943 : weeks : per : weeks : per : weeks : per  
 No) : : : week : : week : : week  
 (16) : (17) : (18) : (19) : (20) : (21) : (22) : (23)

In the instructions to enumerators, the following definition of farm work was given:

### Definition of Farm Work

The definition of a farm here is the same as that ordinarily used in the MRLF, (see Interviewers' Instructions for Filling Control Card, E.03 and E.04).\* Exclude victory gardens.

For the purpose of this inquiry "farm work" is work done on a farm as defined above, in connection with the production, harvesting, preparation for market or delivery to market, of agriculture products. Work done on the farm by a farm operator or a farm laborer in construction, repair, maintenance, or improvement of the farm buildings, fences, tools, etc., is to be included as farm work. However, do not include such work as that of a skilled carpenter, or stone mason hired to construct a farm building, or the work of a well-driller engaged in drilling a well for a farmer, or the work of a commercial trucker in hauling agricultural products to market. Do not include as farm work any housework, or canning primarily for home consumption. Incidental farm chores performed by a housewife or a housemaid are not farm work for the purpose of this survey.

\* This reference gives the 1940 Census of Agriculture definition of a farm.

All work or any duration which can be described as "farm work" under the above definition, whether paid or unpaid, is to be noted on the schedule. Be sure to include unpaid family work on the farm. (See Detailed Instructions to Interviewers for Filling Schedule CS-370G, F.23 and F.24, for definition of unpaid family worker.)

The instructions relating to average weekly hours worked in farm work were as follows:

Average weekly hours worked in farm work. The average to be entered is the average number of hours actually worked in farm work or in attending to farm affairs during those calendar weeks in which any farm work was done. (Some examples of farm affairs are business trips to town to purchase seed or fertilizer, keeping farm accounts, or attending to other matters involved in running the farm business). Weeks in which no farm work was done should not be counted when computing the average.

